

Torrance, California  
April 10, 1941

MINUTES OF AN ADJOURNED REGULAR  
MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
OF THE CITY OF TORRANCE

The City Council of the City of Torrance convened in an adjourned Regular Meeting in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Torrance, California, on Tuesday afternoon, April 10, 1941 at 5:00 P.M.

Mayor McGuire called the meeting to order.

Clerk Bartlett called the roll, those answering present being Councilmen: Babcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. Absent: Councilmen: Hitchcock,

Councilman Babcock moved that the meeting recess until 5:10 P.M. to await the arrival of Councilman Hitchcock. Councilman Murray seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Councilman Hitchcock arrived at 5:03 P.M. The meeting reconvened at 5:10 P.M.

A communication was read from James W. Post, Chairman, Torrance General Committee of Boy Scouts of America, advising that the Chanslor-Canfield Midway Oil Company has donated a plot of ground located behind the International Derrick and Equipment Company for the use of the Boy Scouts of Torrance, and requesting the City to clear the ground of weeds and level it off.

Councilman Hitchcock moved that the request be granted. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried by the following roll call vote: AYES: COUNCILMEN: Babcock, Hitchcock, Murray, Powell and McGuire. NOES: COUNCILMEN: None. ABSENT: COUNCILMEN: None.

Mayor McGuire stated that this meeting was called as a get-together meeting between the City Council and the Coordinating Council for the purpose of discussing the furtherance of the dances which have been held weekly on Friday nights in the Civic Auditorium, and sponsored by the Torrance Coordinating Council. He opened the meeting for discussion.

Robert Lessing, Chairman of the Coordinating Council, introduced Charles Mitschrich, Chairman of the Environment Committee of the Coordinating Council.

Mr. Mitschrich stated the position of the Coordinating Council, declaring the sole purpose of the Council being to do everything possible for the benefit of the youth of the City. He said the assistance and cooperation of the City Council had been sought, in that city affairs are governed by said Council; however, he added, he felt there had been some misunderstanding as to the Coordinating Council's aims, since some of the proposals made by the Coordinating Council had been ignored and others turned down by the City Council. He said the Coordinating Council had no desire whatsoever to usurp the duties of the City Council, nor to take away the privilege and pleasure of helping the boys and girls of the community. He commented that the Coordinators want all the help available from those interested in helping the youth of the City.

Mr. Mitschrich requested Clerk Bartlett to read the motion of April 1, 1941 in which the motion was made, seconded and carried to deny the Coordinating Council the use of the Auditorium, Clerk Bartlett complied.

Mr. Mitschrich then stated that the motion is incorrect in two respects. First (1) "the motion assumes that the dances have not been orderly conducted," and second (2) makes no mention of what the City Council desires the Coordinating Council to do to correct the alleged condition. In order, he said, that intelligent action can be taken, it will first be necessary to know what action is desired, or to know the specific charges. He pointed out that no specific act or incident has been referred to, or has ever been brought to the attention of the Coordinating Council. Two matrons and seven or eight men attend the dances as employees of the Coordinating Council, whose sole job it is to mingle in the crowd and maintain order. He asserted that all the acts complained of have occurred outside the building, bringing it under the direct jurisdiction of the Police Department. He said the Coordinating Council could not be expected to attempt to maintain order on the public streets. Naturally, he said, no dance will be held on Good Friday (April 11, 1941), out of respect to objections based on religious beliefs.

He asked to know what the Council wants the Coordinating Council to do in order to correct the "disorderly conduct" charged to the dances. He said if anyone is in possession of any facts, or has any knowledge of anything immoral taking place at the dances, he felt the Coordinating Council is entitled to be furnished with the information. He said the Coordinating Council is willing to correct whatever is wrong, but they must know what is wrong first. A general statement that "the dances are not run according to the Council's wishes" means nothing to him, said Mr. Mitschrich.

Money which has been made at the dances has been expended for various community and youth betterment activities, he stated, at which time he introduced Vernon Coil, who read a financial statement of the Coordinating Council. This report covered the period of May 26, 1939, to April 4, 1941, showing total receipts of \$11,496.84 and total disbursements of \$10,009.24 for maintaining the dances and \$1322.41 donated to various community organizations, clubs and churches, leaving a balance of \$165.19. He said the average attendance at the dances is five or six hundred.

Dr. Fossum added that large sums had been appropriated for other organizations prior to the period above mentioned and said that a large amount of this money, which is actually spent in Torrance, comes from outside, as the dance attracts outside boys and girls.

Councilman Powell asked Clerk Bartlett to read the letter received from the Ministerial Association protesting the dances, which letter was first read April 1, 1941, at which time the motion to deny the Coordinating Council the use of the auditorium for weekly dances was taken. Clerk Bartlett complied with the request, reading the communication from the Ministerial Association dated March 26, 1941.

Councilman Powell said it had been the intention of the City Council to eliminate the complaint given in the Ministerial Association letter, if such a complaint existed.

Mr. Mitschrich asked why, then, the City Council had not given the Coordinating Council an opportunity to appear and state its cause instead of taking action at a meeting held at an unusual hour, and without affording the Coordinating Council a chance to defend the dances. Furthermore, he said, the Ministerial Association states no source in its letter from which it obtained its information. In connection with the letter received from the Ministerial Association, he said it did not speak for the Ministerial Association, composed of nine or ten preachers, but spoke only for four or five preachers themselves.

Mrs. Flora Wright mentioned that certain religious groups condemn dancing at any time, and pointed out that a lot of the complaint might be based on this rather than on any specific charges against the Friday night Coordinating Council dances.

Reverend F. T. Porter, speaking for the Ministerial Association, advised that all the members of the Association had been present except one when the action was taken to request discontinuance of the dances. He said he had heard a number of local young people remark that the dances were "rotten", and that they no longer attended for that reason. He heard this conversation, he remarked, between eight young people he was driving in his automobile to a roller skating party in Culver City. He said he gave some young men a ride one day and had overheard them remark "it is easy to get the girls in Torrance to go out with."

Quoted from memory

Reverend Porter addressed the assemblage at this time, remarking that he had conversed with Judge Lessing recently regarding the alleged immorality among the young people, during which conversation, he said, Judge Lessing had remarked, "the kids will do it anyway", which, he said, in his opinion (Reverend Porter's) was certainly the wrong attitude to take toward the matter. He said anyone interested in the welfare of the young people should have agreed to see what could be done about the situation.

Mr. Lessing remarked that Reverend Porter had misquoted him. When Reverend Porter still maintained that the statement had been made, Judge Lessing stated "I realize this is no place to start an argument", which ended the conversation.

Mr. Mitschrich asked Reverend Porter specifically what the charges against the dances are, to which Reverend Porter replied "you know- you have been there."

Councilman Powell remarked that his understanding, at the very beginning of the dances, was that participants in the dances would be admitted only by card, which would eliminate undesirable persons from attending the dances.

Robert Lessing pointed out that, according to Reverend Porter's

own statement, the objectionable conduct referred to by the Ministerial Association takes place outside the building, for which those conducting the dances should not be held responsible. He pointed out further that he felt there is nothing wrong with the dances, being supervised by eight people. In defense of jitterbug dancing, he said he considered it more proper from the moral standpoint than the old type of waltzing and ballroom dancing, the jitterbug dance being more like a stage exhibition. He said the Coordinating Council dances were largely responsible for closing of the Mandarin Ballroom in Redondo Beach and The Hut in Hermosa Beach, which places he termed "rat holes".

In answer to the suggestion that only local young people be allowed to attend the dances, Mr. Lessing pointed out that it should be the purpose of all organizations interested in community betterment to encourage people to come to Torrance. Also, he remarked, the young people, with their natural desire to meet different people, would not be interested for long in a dance where only a few local people participate.

Although the Coordinating Council has no complaint with the Ministerial Association, he added, the manner in which their objection was presented to the Council without giving the Coordinating Council a chance to answer the broad and general charges is objected to.

He said the Coordinating Council is seriously perturbed over the undemocratic manner in which the auditorium was denied the Coordinating Council, describing this act as the most absurd statement of policy by an official body he had ever heard.

He outlined briefly some of the work of the Coordinating Council, mentioning that the Council had been recognized nationally as an outstanding Coordinating Council and had been chosen as the finest and most progressive in California, and, he finished, the Coordinating Council demands to be recognized as a community organization and to be given the recognition to which it is entitled.

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Dr. Fossum suggested that if the parents who object to their children attending the dances would identify those children tickets would not be sold to them.

Mayor McGuire said he felt sure a solution could be found and the dances operated to everyone's satisfaction, and could be made one of the most outstanding events of the week. He suggested that perhaps if the boys and girls were required to dress up a little more than they do they may have a little more respect for each other and for the event. At a number of community dances which he said he had attended, boys were required to wear coats before being admitted into the building.

Mr. Mitschrich suggested that the City Council enact a parking ordinance whereby automobiles would be parked a certain distance away from the auditorium on Friday nights while the dances were in progress.

Mayor McGuire pointed out that the only objection to this procedure would be that the City of Torrance would acquire a reputation similar to several other cities which motorists avoid due to stringent traffic laws.

In regard to the outsiders coming in to attend the dances, Robert Lessing remarked that the City pays the Chamber of Commerce \$7,000.00 per year to bring in outsiders. He said the Coordinating Council brought in 32,000 people since the dances started. Out of 32,000 attendance, he commented, only 21 arrests were made. He commended J. H. Stroh, Chief of Police, for his cooperation with the Coordinating Council.

Mr. Lessing said the action of the City Council, taken on receipt of a letter from the Ministerial Association condemning the Coordinating Council dances as immoral, strikes at the character of all the members of the Coordinating Council, and asked that a public apology be spread on the records to erase any stigma which was put on the characters of these members.

Mrs. J. O. Bishop, representing the High School Parent-Teacher Association, spoke in defense of the dance.

Vernon Coil said the system of not issuing pass out tickets to the dancers had been tried, but due to the poor ventilation of the auditorium building, this plan had not been overly successful. He said they had also tried roping off the space between the auditorium and the Chamber of Commerce building, allowing the dancers to use that space.

Councilman Powell said he had heard his son remark that the boys and girls might enjoy the dancing more if they were required to dress up a little more. Councilman Hitchcock said he had heard the same thought expressed several times.

Vernon Coil said the attendance had dropped off considerably when the system of refusing to issue pass out tickets was instituted, resulting in a substantial loss to the dance. Mayor McGuire advised that there would be no objection to granting the auditorium free of charge on evenings when the dance operated at a loss.

Councilman Murray said he and the other Council members had been considering the problem for some time and had drawn up a set of rules, one of them being not to issue pass out checks.

He said he did not believe anything had been said about anything immoral taking place at the dances, and assured the Coordinating Council that it is the desire of the City Council to work with them in an effort to settle the matter.

Upon request, Councilman Murray read the rules which had been drawn up.

After a few more minutes discussion, Councilman Hitchcock moved that the dances be returned to the Coordinating Council on the same basis as they have been operated for the past four years, with the understanding that, if the Coordinating Council has any complaints, they bring them to the City Council, and if the City Council has any complaints, the complaints be taken to the Coordinating Council in an effort to reach an intelligent decision on the course of action to follow. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Mrs. Wright advised that, in the matter of requiring boys and girls to carry identification cards, investigation had disclosed that the schools would charge a fee for issuance of same and it was felt that some of the boys and girls would not obtain the cards.

Mr. Lessing asked whether or not it was the intention of the motion to return the dances to the Coordinating Council to take away all the stigma which was placed on the characters of members of the Coordinating Council by the motion made, seconded and carried April 1, 1941 when the auditorium was denied the Coordinating Council for the purpose of holding dances.

Councilman Hitchcock replied that he thought that was the intention.

Councilman Murray said he did not believe the April 1, 1941 motion had been intended to reflect against the characters of any member of the Coordinating Council, Mr. Lessing advising that the motion speaks for itself.



Mr. Lessing said that unless all implications made by the April 1, 1941 motion are withdrawn, it will be necessary to take up with the Directors of the Coordinating Council the advisability of resuming the dances. If all implications are withdrawn, he said, the dances will be taken back at this time.

Mayor McGuire advised that he felt sure Mr. Lessing had given the motion the wrong interpretation, as it was never meant to cast reflection on any member of the Coordinating Council.

Jack Miller advised that the Coordinating Council is glad to receive suggestions at any time of anyone who can offer a plan for carrying out activities.

A communication signed by Edmund T. Grosselfinger, Supervisor of District, Los Angeles Recreation Project, was read regarding national defense preferred projects. It was requested that a Recreation Committee be appointed and to take certain steps (outlined in the letter) to raise the probability of recreation being set up in the community under noncertified preferred basis.

Councilman Murray explained that the Federal Government is considering allocating funds for recreation projects and requested that a committee of five, one to be selected by each councilman, subject to approval of the entire council, be appointed. The five to be appointed in addition to three already on the Recreation Committee of the City Council to compose an eight man committee.

Councilman Murray moved that each councilman select 1 person to work on the Recreation Committee as described above, the entire committee appointment to be approved and made by the Council. Councilman Babcock seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

At 6:28 P.M., Councilman Babcock moved that the meeting be adjourned to Tuesday, April 15, 1941 at 5:00 P.M. Councilman Powell seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

A. H. Bantlett  
City Clerk of the City of Torrance

Approved:

Tom F. McGuire  
Mayor of the City of Torrance